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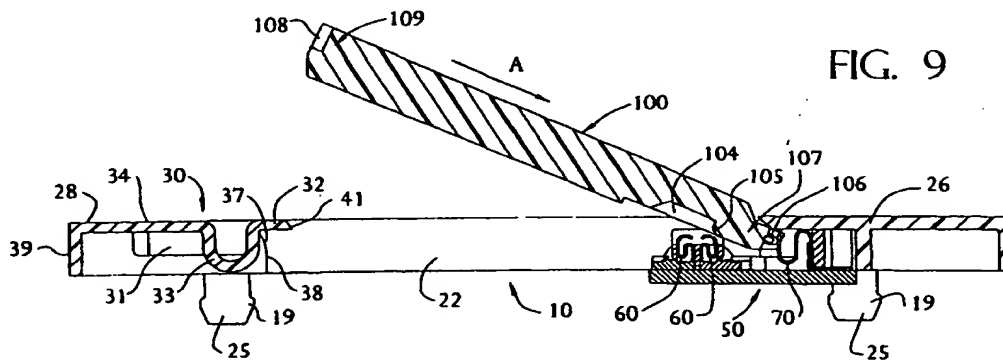
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(54) Socket for miniature memory card

(57) A memory card socket (10) having a frame (20) adapted for connection to a peripheral device and defining a card receiving opening (23) adapted to receive a memory card (100). The socket includes a contact array (60,70) which provides a connection between the card and the peripheral device. The contact array includes a plurality of spring force contacts (60) comprising a fixed

portion (78) and a coil portion (80) which is loaded upon insertion of the card. The socket further includes a release mechanism (30) which, upon actuation, allows unloading of the spring force contacts (60) and ejection of the card (100).

**FIG. 9****EP 0 924 972 A2**

Description

[0001] The present invention relates to memory cards which are used in electronic devices. More particularly, the present invention relates to a socket for a miniature memory card.

[0002] Memory cards are commonly used in various kinds of electronic equipment in the communications and computer industries. The memory cards are advantageous because they provide flash type memory; that is, they retain data without requiring a constant power supply and transfer the data through electronic components which do not require moving heads or rotating media. Originally, memory cards came in standard sizes which all had a standard footprint approximately the size of a credit card. However, with electronic equipment becoming smaller and smaller, compact and miniature memory cards, having footprints approximately the size of a matchbook, were developed.

[0003] Memory cards are generally interchangeable, and therefore, the electronic equipment must be provided with sockets which mechanically and electrically connect the memory cards to the electronic device. Prior art sockets, particularly those made for compact and miniature memory cards, are generally provided with elastomeric connectors to electronically connect the card to the electronic device. These elastomeric connectors often provide very high contact resistance. To increase the electrical contact it is often necessary to increase the pressure between the card and the elastomeric connector. However, this results in a more complex mechanical system.

[0004] The sockets must also include release mechanisms to allow removal of the memory cards. Prior art card sockets generally provide non-integral buttons, levers and latches to effectuate ejection of the card. Such mechanisms are complicated to manufacture and introduce more components which are subject to failure.

[0005] Accordingly, there is a need for a light weight, simple and reliable miniature card socket.

[0006] The present invention relates to a memory card socket adapted for connection to a peripheral electronic device. The socket generally includes a frame, a release mechanism, and a contact array. The frame defines a card receiving opening adapted to receive the memory card. The contact array includes a plurality of spring force contacts which provide a connection between the card and the peripheral device. Each spring force contact includes a fixed portion and a coil portion which is loaded upon insertion of the card. Actuation of the release mechanism allow unloading of the spring force contacts and ejection of the card.

[0007] The frame may include forward, rear and side frame members where the release mechanism is integrally formed with the rear frame member.

[0008] Embodiments of the present invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

Figure 1 is an isometric view of the components of the card socket of the present invention and a memory card which is positioned therein;

Figure 2 is a top plan view of the socket frame of the present invention;

Figure 3 is a top plan view of a connector in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 4 is an elevation view of a connector in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 5 is an elevation view of a ground contact in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 6 is a flat pattern view of the ground contact;

Figure 7 is an elevation view of a spring contact in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 8 is a sectional view taken along the line 8-8 in Figure 1; and

Figures 9-13 are sectional views showing the progression of a memory card being inserted and removed from the socket of the present invention.

[0009] The preferred embodiments will be described with reference to the drawing figures wherein like numerals represent like elements throughout. Reference to orientation herein is provided for clarity only and is not intended to limit the configuration or placement of the device.

[0010] The preferred embodiment of the card socket 10 made in accordance with the present invention is shown in Figure 1. The socket 10 generally comprises a frame 20, a release mechanism 30, and a connector 50. An exemplary memory card 100 is also shown in Figure 1. It generally comprises a body member 102 having a plurality of contact receptacles 104 and ground contacts 106 extending across its forward end 107 and a plurality of retainer notches 108 across its rear end 109.

[0011] The frame 20 will be described in more detail with reference to Figures 1 and 2. Referring to Figure 1, the frame 20 includes forward and rear frame members 26 and 28 and opposed lateral frame members 22 and 24 extending therebetween. The frame members 22, 24, 26, and 28 define a generally rectangular card receiving opening 23. A pair of legs 25 depends from each lateral frame members 22, 24. The legs 25 include flared portions 19 which pass through holes in the printed circuit board and connect the socket 10 thereto. Other connection means may also be used to connect the socket 10 to a circuit board, as is known in the art.

[0012] Each lateral frame member 22, 24 has a pair of integrated notches 42 and 44 which are dimensioned to receive a tab 52 and lateral edge 54 of the connector 50. A post 46 depends from the interior surface of forward frame member 26 and is dimensioned to mate with a receiving hole 56 on the connector 50. As such, the connector 50 is maintained in position in the frame 20 through the interference fit of the tabs 52 and lateral edges 54 in frame notches 42 and 44, and of post 46 in

receiving hole 56.

[0013] Referring to Figure 2, the rear frame member 28 includes a planar portion, defined by edge members 36, extensions 34, and a rear wall 39. Each edge member 36 is integrally formed at the intersection between a respective lateral frame member 22, 24 and the rear wall 39. As shown in Figure 9, an angular wall portion 37 and a vertical wall portion 38 depend from the forward end of each edge member 36. Each extension 34 extends from the rear wall 39 adjacent to a respective edge member 36. A slot 35 separates the forward portion of each extension 34 from the adjacent edge portion 36. This allows the forward portion of each extension 34 to be flexible. The extensions 34 and rear wall 39 define an opening 29 in the rear frame member 28.

[0014] The release mechanism 30 is formed integral with the rear frame member 28 and will be described with reference to Figures 2 and 9. The release member includes a pair of U-shaped return members 33. One end of each return member 33 extends from the forward end of a respective extension 34. The other end of the return member 33 terminates in a retention tab 32. In the initially assembled position, as shown in Figure 9, the retention tabs 32 preferably extend along the same plane as extensions 34 and extend forward of vertical walls 38. The extensions 34 and returns 33 are flexible to allow the retention tabs 32 to move rearward and downward as the card 100 is inserted, as will be described in greater detail hereinafter. A thumb pad 31 extends between the retention tabs 32 and is dimensioned to fit within opening 29. The thumb pad 31 is depressed to automatically release the card 100, as will be described hereinafter.

[0015] The connector 50 will now be described with reference to Figures 3-8. Referring specifically to Figures 3 and 4, the connector 50 includes an array of contacts 60, 70 and includes a main body portion 51 having a width which allows tabs 52 and lateral edges 54 to be interference fit in notches 42 and 44 of each lateral frame member 22, 24 of frame 20. Receiving hole 56 is provided in an elevated portion 55 at the forward edge of body 51 and is positioned to be aligned with frame post 46. Additional elevated portions 57 are provided along the forward edge of body 51 adjacent to the lateral sides 54. Elevated portions 57 have a plurality of slots 72 for receiving grounding contacts 70. The rear edge of connector main body 51 includes a contact housing 63 which is defined by a raised portion with a plurality of spring contact receiving openings 62 extending there-through. The underside of contact housing 63 has a plurality of slots 61 aligned with the spring contact receiving openings 62. Each slot 61 receives and retains the lead portion 64 of a spring contact 60 when it is inserted in the opening 62. An alignment peg 53 is preferably provided along each lateral edge 54 of body 51 to correctly position the connector 50 relative to the surface mount pads on the circuit board to which it is

attached.

[0016] Referring to Figures 5 and 6, each grounding contact includes a lead portion 76, a retention or fixed portion 78, and a coil contact portion 80. The grounding contacts 70 are positioned in the connector 50 with the retention portions extending through slots 72 in main body 51, see Figure 8. Each retention portion 78 includes shoulders 79 extending outward therefrom which provide an interference with the slot 72 to maintain the grounding contact 70 in position. Each lead portion 76 extends below the lower plane of connector 50 whereby it makes electrical contact with grounding strips on the printed circuit board to which the socket 10 is attached. The coil contact portions 80 extend rearward of slots 72 where they are positioned to contact the card ground contacts 106.

[0017] Referring to Figures 7 and 8, each spring contact 60 includes a lead portion 64, a post 66, and a spring portion 68. When the spring contacts 60 are positioned in contact housing 63, the leads 64 extend below the plane of housing 63 to allow electrical contact with the printed circuit board. Each lead 64 and post 66 is provided with a protuberance 65, 67, respectively, which embeds in the contact housing 63 to maintain the spring contact 60 in position. The spring portion 68 provides an electrical contact to the card 100, and also coils to provide an ejecting spring force, as will be described in more detail hereinafter. Having described the components of the socket 10, its operation will now be described with reference to Figures 9-13.

[0018] As indicated by arrow A in Figure 9, the card forward end 107 is initially inserted into the card receiving opening 23 adjacent to forward frame member 26. In this initial position shown in Figure 9, the card ground contacts 106 begin to contact the grounding contacts 70 of connector 50.

[0019] The card 100 is then pushed forward and downward, as indicated by arrows B and C in Figure 10, whereby the card ground contacts 106 push against coil contact portion 80 of ground contact 70. The spring force of coil contact portion 80 begins to load. At the same time, the spring contacts 60 begin to enter the card contact receptacles 104. The receptacles 104 have a beveled front surface 105 which assists in aligning the receptacles 104 with the spring contacts 60.

[0020] Turning to Figure 11, the rear portion 109 of card 100 is pushed further downward in the direction of arrow D. As the card rear end 109 moves downward, the front end 107 moves slightly forward, whereby card ground contacts 106 push against the connector grounding contacts 70 and coil contact portions 80 become almost completely loaded. At the same time, the card contact receptacles 104 are aligned with and contact the connector spring contacts 60. The contact receptacles 104 begin to deflect, and thereby load, the spring portion 68 of contacts 60. The card rear end 109 contacts the retention tabs 32 and deflects the tabs 32 and thumb pad 31 downward.

[0021] As the connector card 100 is pushed in the direction of arrow E in Figure 12, the card rear beveled portion 110 contacts the tab beveled portions 41. This forces tabs 32 and thumb pad 31 rearward until the tabs 32 clear card rear end 109 and enter retainer notches 108. The tabs 32 remain in contact with the retainer notches 108 and thereby maintain the card in position in the socket 10, as shown in Figure 12.

[0022] Referring to Figure 13, the card 100 is released by pushing downward and rearward on thumb pad 31. In conjunction therewith, the retention tabs 32 rotate rearward and upward. As the tabs 32 release the tension on the card rear end 109, the contact spring portions 68 and 80 begin to push the card 100 rearward and upward. The card is initially pushed rearward until the card rear end 109 contacts the frame vertical wall 38. However, as the thumb pad 31 is depressed further and the tabs 32 move rearward and upward, as shown in Figure 14, the spring contact spring portions 68 push up on the card 100 until the beveled edge 110 thereof meets the rear frame angled surface 37. At that point, the spring forces loaded in contact spring portions 68 and 80 cause the card 100 to slide along surface 37 until the card rear end 109 clears the socket 10. The card 100 is then lifted from socket 10.

Claims

1. A memory card socket (10) of a type having a frame (20) adapted for connection to a peripheral device and defining a card receiving opening (23) adapted to receive a memory card (100), a release mechanism (30), and a contact array (60,70) which provides a connection between the card and the peripheral device, the contact array (60,70) including a plurality of spring force contacts (60), each spring force contact (60) including a fixed portion (78) and a coil portion (80) which is loaded upon insertion of the card (100), whereby actuation of the release mechanism (30) allows unloading of the spring force contacts (60) and ejection of the card (100).
2. The socket (10) of claim 1, wherein the frame (20) includes a rear frame member (28) which defines a rear edge of the card receiving opening (23) and the release mechanism (30) is formed integrally with the rear frame member (28).
3. A memory card socket (10) of a type having a frame (20) adapted for connection to a peripheral device and including forward (26), rear (28) and side (22,24) frame members which define a card receiving opening (23) adapted to receive a memory card (100), and a release mechanism (30) formed integrally with the rear frame member (28).
4. The socket (10) of claim 3, wherein the socket (10) comprises a contact array (60,70) including a plurality of spring force contacts (60), each spring force contact (60) including a fixed portion (78) and a coil portion (80) which is loaded upon insertion of the card (100), whereby actuation of the release mechanism (30) allows unloading of the spring force contacts (60) and ejection of the card (100).
5. The socket (10) of claim 1, 2 or 4, wherein the contact array (60,70) includes at least one grounding contact (70).
6. The socket (10) of claim 1, 2, 4 or 5, wherein the contact array (60,70) is affixed to a connector (50) associated with said frame (20).
7. The socket (10) of claim 2 or 3 or any claim dependent thereon, wherein the rear frame member (28) includes a flexible portion (34) which allows deflection of the release mechanism (30).
8. The socket (10) of claim 7, wherein the release mechanism (30) includes a retention tab (32) and a flexible return member (33) extending between the retention tab (32) and the rear frame member flexible portion (34) whereby the retention tab is movable between a deflected position which permits insertion of the card (100) into the card receiving opening (23) and a retention position which maintains the card in the socket.
9. The socket (10) of claim 8, wherein the release mechanism (30) includes a pad member (31) associated with the retention tab (32) whereby depression of the pad member (31) moves the retention tab (32) from the retention position to an ejection position which allows removal of the card from the socket.

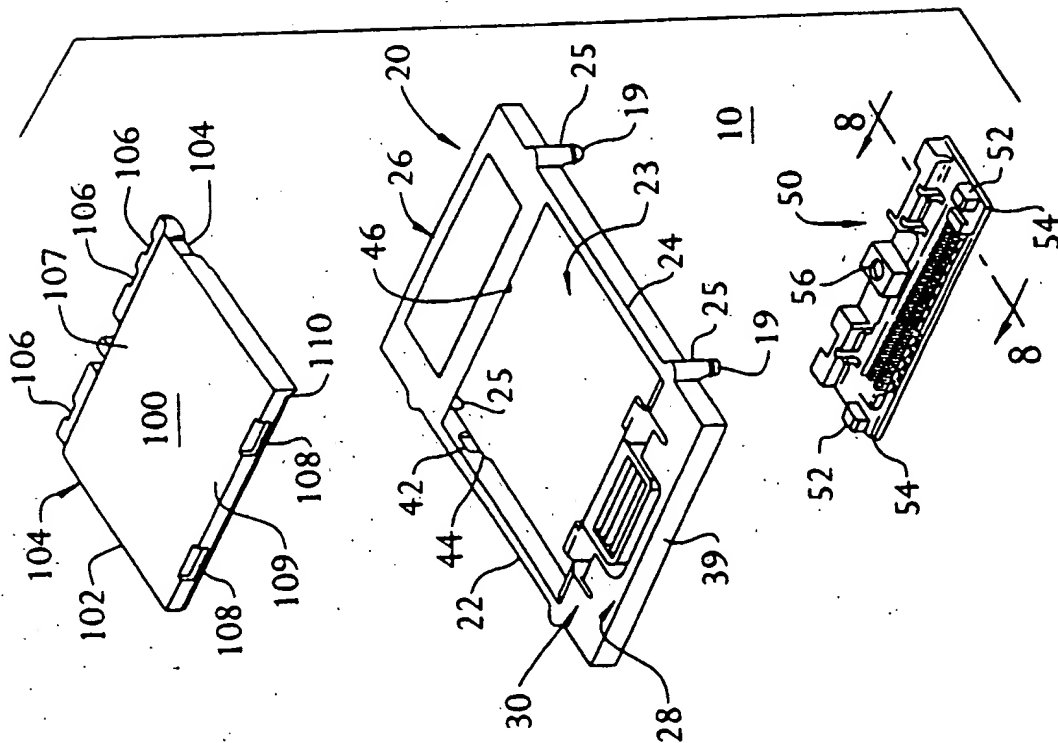


FIG. 1

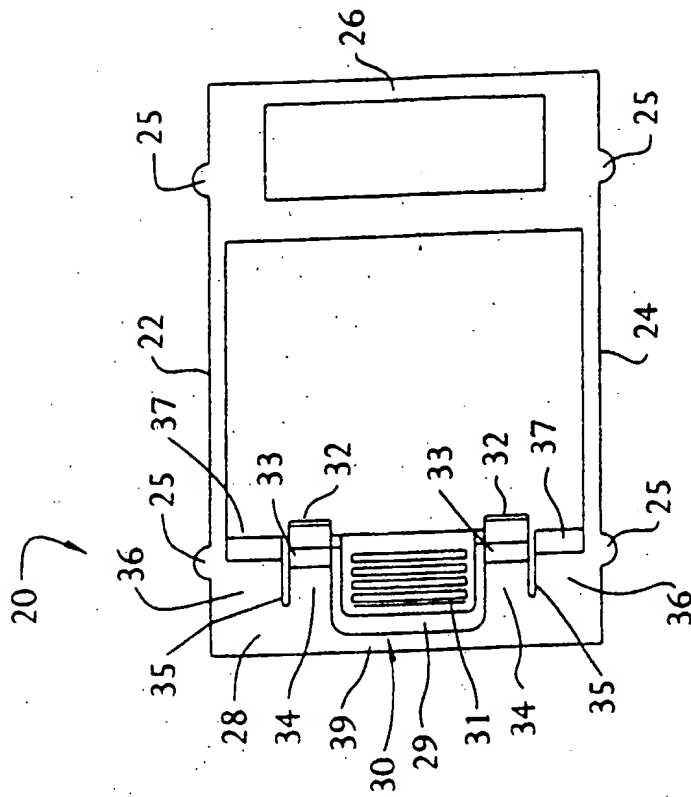


FIG. 2

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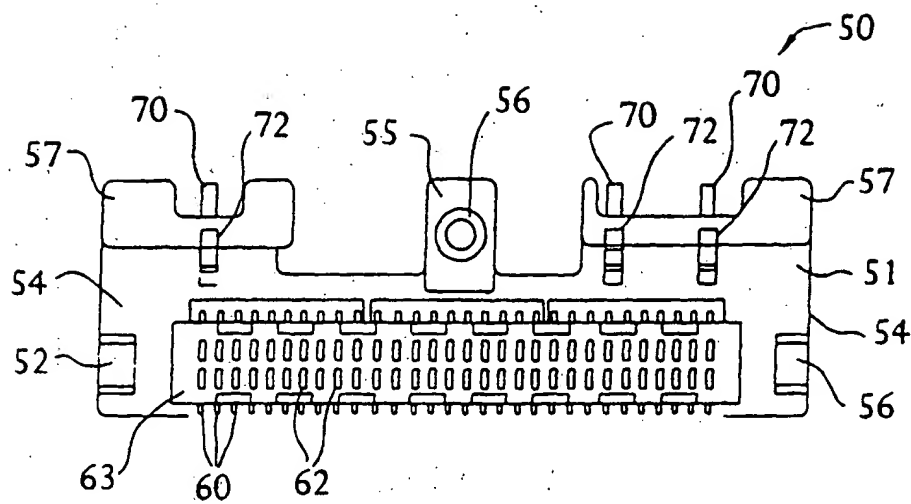


FIG. 3

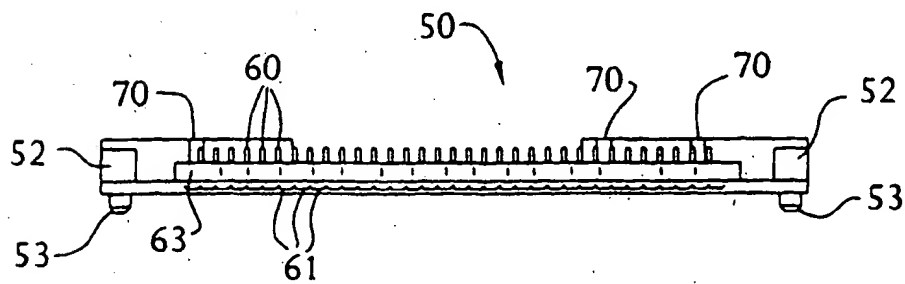


FIG. 4

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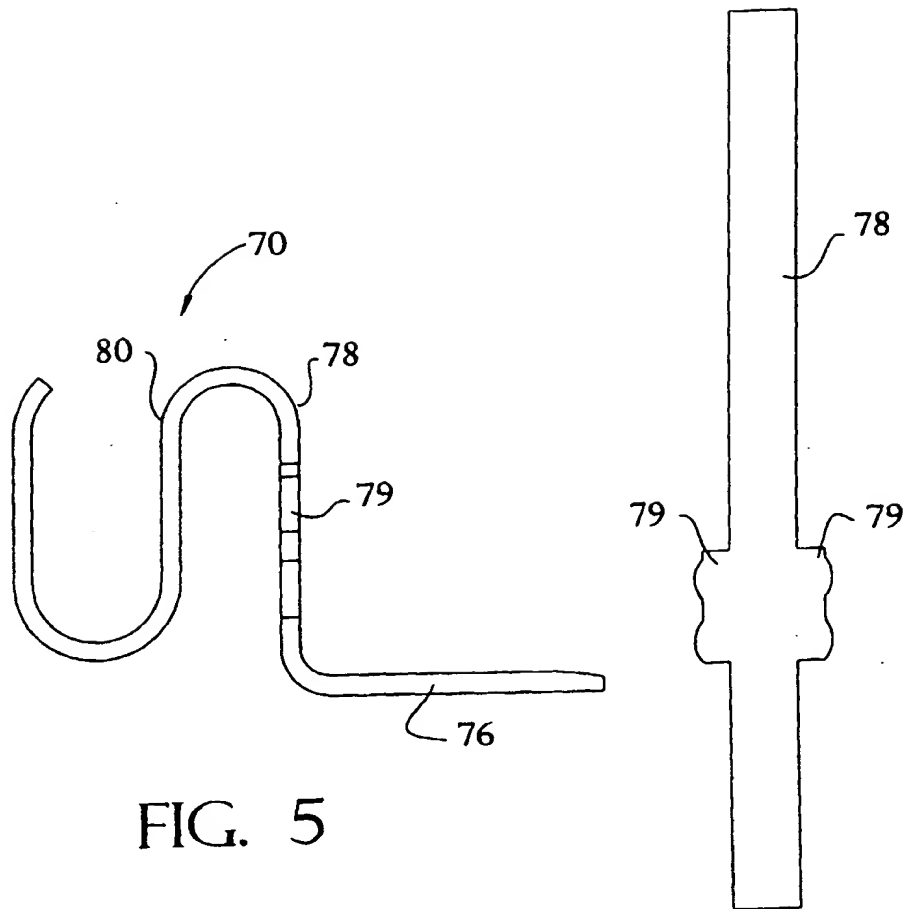


FIG. 5

FIG. 6

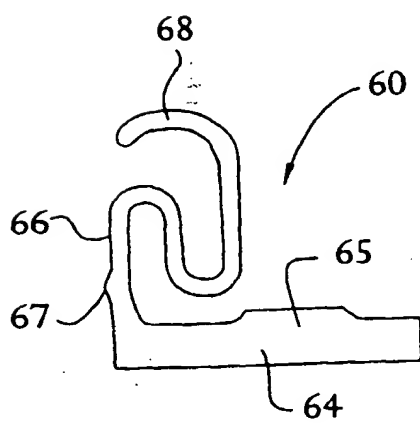


FIG. 7

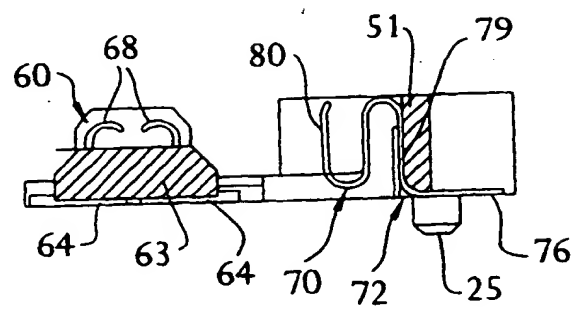
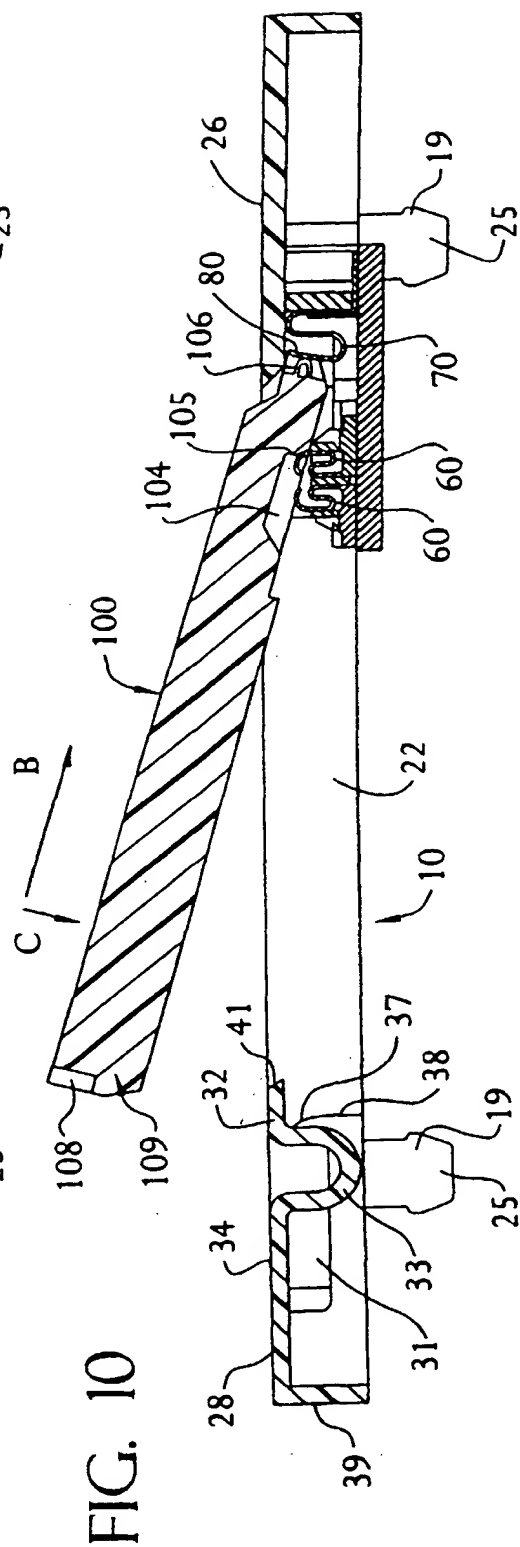
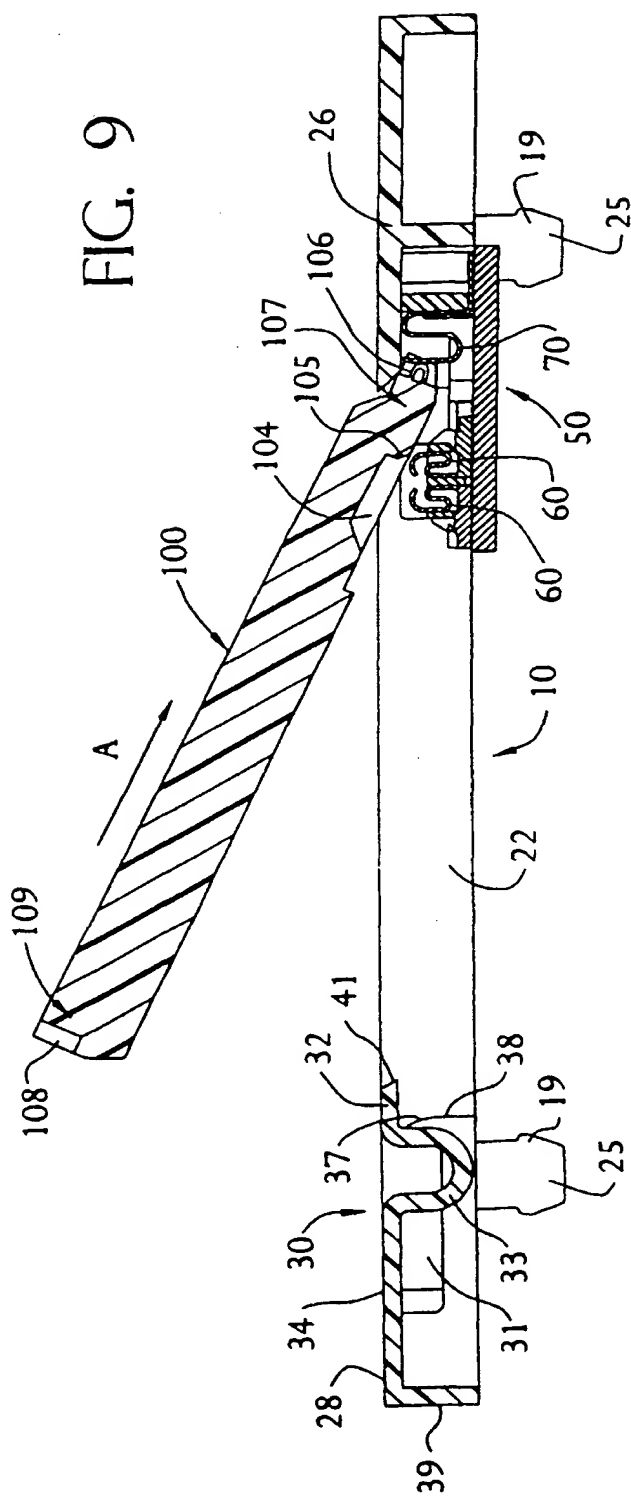


FIG. 8



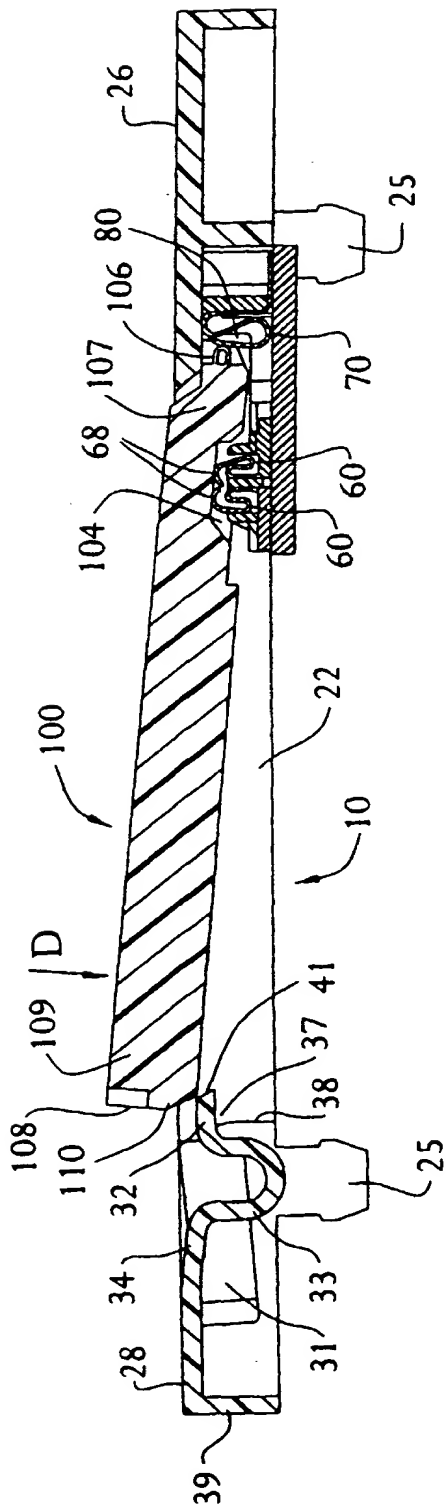


FIG. 11

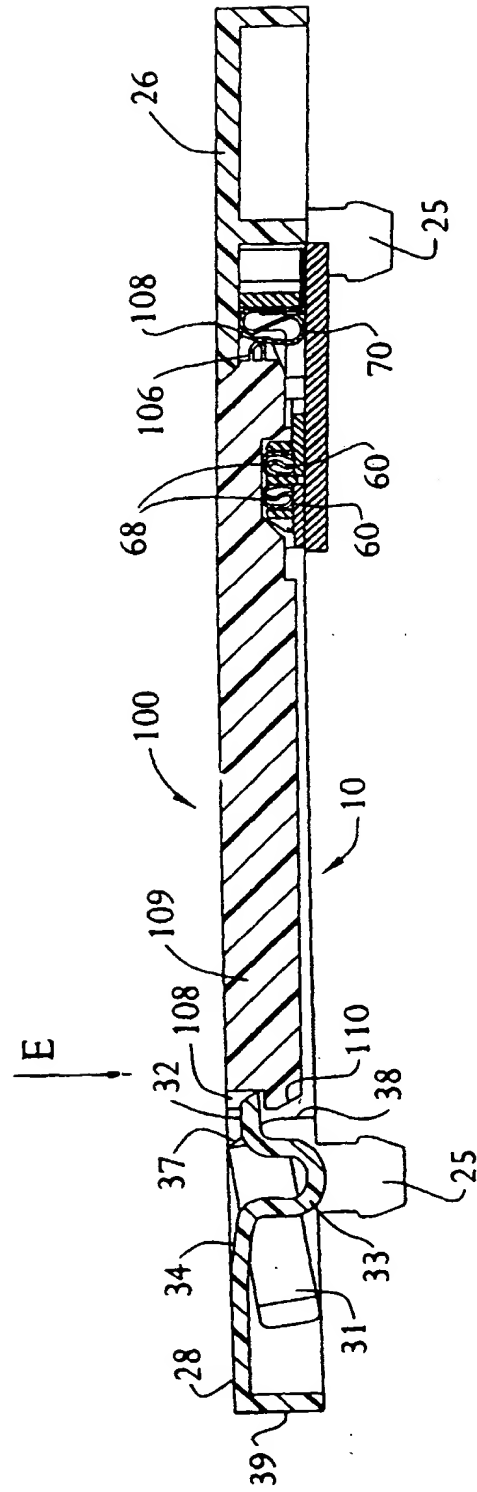


FIG. 12

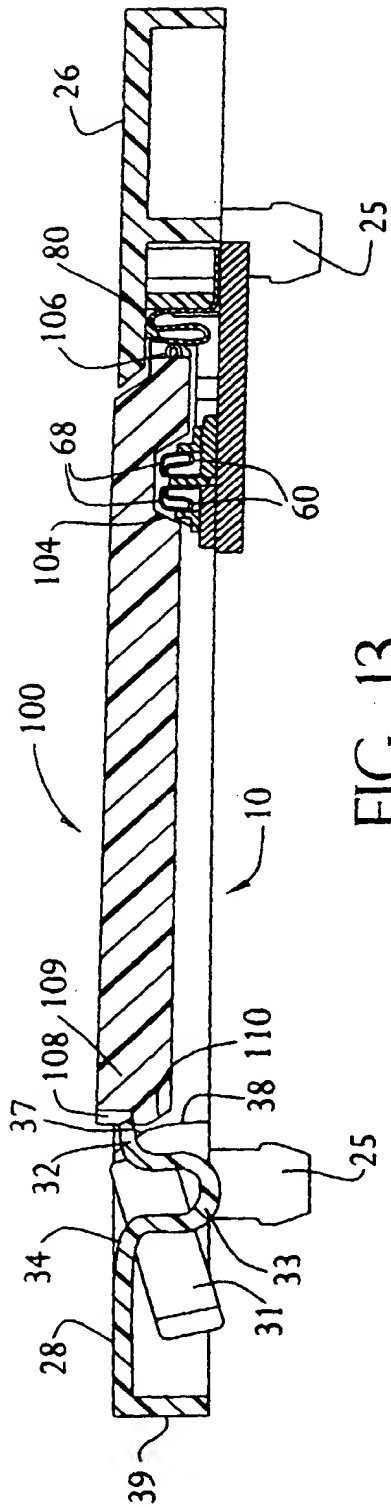


FIG. 13

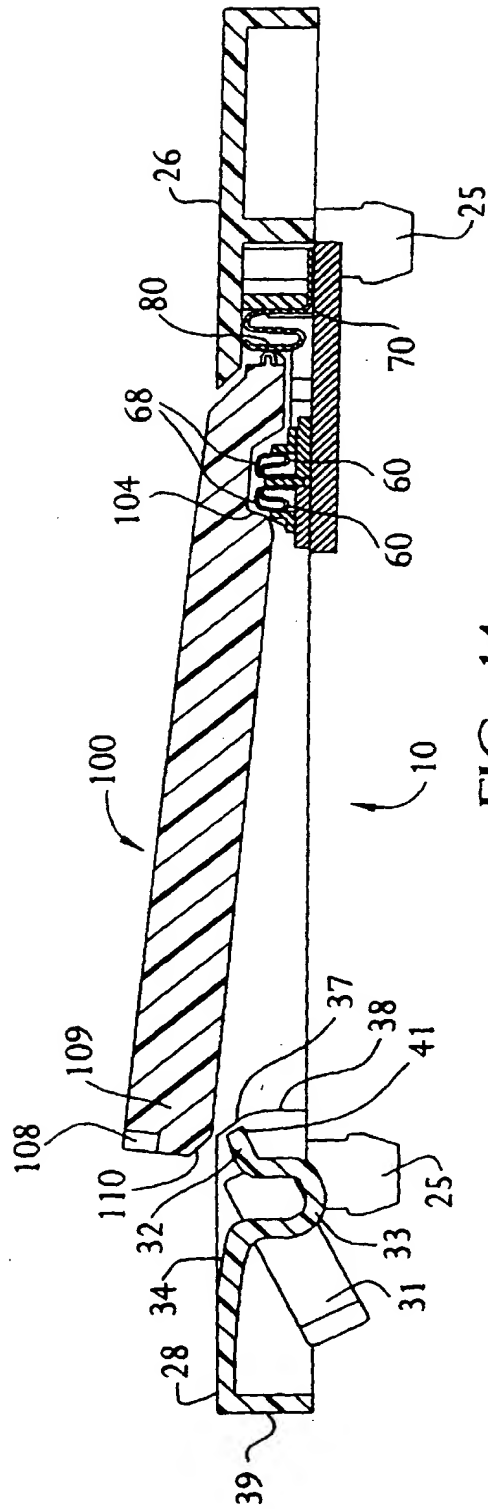


FIG. 14